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ABSTRACT

Much has been said and written about the importance of local and community organizations for the development of access to learning opportunities in impoverished countries. Calls for greater self-reliance and for educational services relevant to local conditions and community needs and that meet the needs of all constituents have increased since the 1990 World Conference on Education for All. Central governments have not met these goals due to the following: (1) financial constraints; (2) lack of human resources, and (3) inadequate means of communication. Families, communities, non-governmental organizations, businesses, the private sector, and even the disadvantaged themselves must take a more active role in and contribute to the provision of educational opportunities in partnership with government. Finally, governmental authorities should delegate decision-making and try new approaches. (Guidelines in the document include community organization techniques and practices; voting procedures; committee organization; suggested learning opportunities with curricula; facilitator and teacher role delineations; fiscal considerations; materials and supplies; distance learning using radio; inclusion of women and women's organizations; use of cooperatives; and remuneration of professionals. Attachments include a community development questionnaire; a list of equipment and materials for locally administered education services; a list of accommodations that could be provided by the local community; and possible education services to be provided by the local community.) (AJ)

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC
AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION

THE LOCAL AND COMMUNITY ORGANIZATION OF LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

John Allen

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Introduction

Much has been said and written about the importance of local and community organizations for the development of access to learning opportunities. Calls for greater self-reliance, for educational services which are relevant to local conditions and community needs, and which meet the learning needs of all, have noticeably increased since the World Conference on Education for All held at Jomtien, Thailand, in 1990. Local and community organizations are increasingly established to meet the needs of those disadvantaged groups, which are so often by-passed by central, regional and provincial administrations and jurisdictions. They are to be found in slums and marginal areas in towns, in rural areas, among refugees, and the victims of natural and man-made disasters. It is now more generally accepted that central governments in developing countries, even with the best of intentions, and in comparatively stable conditions, are unable to provide all the educational services that are required. Financial constraints, the lack of human resources, inadequate means of communication, etc., all militate against the expansion of the inadequate educational facilities that exist. It is recognized that families, communities, non-governmental organizations, businesses and the private sector, and even the disadvantaged themselves, must take a more active role in, and contribute to, the provision of educational opportunities for all, if human development is to be possible.

Self-reliance must not, however, be seen as a ploy for abnegating all government responsibility for providing social services, and for reducing public spending. It must be seen, instead, as a means by which people are involved more closely in the development of relevant educational services, and by which they are made more readily available. Ill-considered accusations that education services administered by local communities are second-best education, will inevitably be made unless all aspects of the problem are considered. It is not a matter of choosing between two alternative approaches to the provision of education, but of assuming responsibility for establishing a social service, rather than wait until such time as a central authority, faced with considerable financial constraints, is able to provide it. Ministries of education and universities in many parts of the world have carefully prepared plans for the provision of universal access to primary education, which have no possibility whatsoever of being implemented, because the necessary financial, human and material resources are not at the disposal of the central government. Resolutions to eradicate illiteracy and to provide universal primary education have been passed regularly at international conferences for almost half a century, and yet these goals are as far away as ever from being reached. Escape from poverty and deprivation is rarely achieved through individual action, and is best carried out in concert with others, and by means of corporate action. Local and community organizations, as well as private initiative and enterprise, provide this opportunity, but help is needed to show how their contribution can be more effective.

Though much has been said and written about the importance of local and community organization, little has been done to show how the considerable problems and difficulties which are met, when attempts are made to implement programmes in this field, can be overcome. It is not enough merely to encourage the setting up of local organizations. It cannot be assumed that because they exist they will work effectively in the interests of the people they are intended to serve. There is also a need for guidance on how to establish them, and for careful consideration to be given to how the many obstacles encountered when doing so, can be removed. Many community projects started with outside assistance from agencies and governments, which were intended to be self-reliant, were not sustained, since initial decisions were not made by the people themselves but by others acting on their behalf, and because false hopes were raised that help would continue beyond the date when outside assistance ceased. It is also certain that there will be considerable opposition in many quarters to the suggestion that responsibility for education be delegated by the central government to local authorities and groups. Civil servants, teachers, university staff and political groups, may all resent and resist any attempt to transfer decision-making with regard to educational services to others, whom they may consider to be less competent than themselves.

Types of Local and Community Organization

Local organizations exist in all parts of the world - in both developed and developing countries. They are established for a variety of purposes, which may include not only the provision of health and education services but also the management of social occasions, the provision of religious instruction, the organization of political groups, and the administration of justice. In certain African countries, for example, there has long been a tradition of local organization for community events, such as betrothals, weddings, funerals, celebrations and ceremonies.

In Ethiopia traditional organizations have existed in local communities for centuries. The 'idir' and the 'equb' are among the best known, and are found in almost every community. They are non-denominational, non-partisan and non-governmental. The 'idir' is primarily an association for the organization of burials, but is often responsible for development activities as well. The 'equb' is a financial body to which local people subscribe fixed sums of money on a monthly or weekly basis. The money collected is then awarded to one of the members of the 'equb', after the holding of a lottery. Each member of the organization benefits in turn from the system. The rules governing these organizations are very strict, and to be expelled from them can have serious social consequences. Membership, however, is voluntary and not obligatory.

In many areas, where the central government exercises little control, it is the community alone which dispenses justice. Religious organizations played, and continue to play, a major role in the provision of social services and learning facilities. Mosques, churches, monasteries and temples often provide valuable services in the teaching of basic literacy and numeracy, religious instruction and other types of education. Today it is not only schools, universities and colleges that are centres of instruction, but factories, workshops, clinics and hospitals, as well as modern information technologies - all of which are outside the formal education system.

The need for the private sector to be involved in education has long been recognized and, even at the highest levels of education, research is no longer considered to be the exclusive prerogative of universities and colleges. Business enterprises have invested large sums in education for many years, and the first major company to do so in the west was IBM. In England, for example, the largest research and development centre today, though attached to Warwick University, is not run by it. It has been established by a wealthy Indian business man, and meets the specific needs of large companies such as British Aerospace, Rolls Royce and Rover. Staff at the centre are not paid according to university scales, but according to what are considered to be relevant rates. They work for 12 months a year, and not according to the much shorter university calendar, and are dismissed if their performance does not come up to expectations, (The Economist, 11 November 1995). Such programmes are not developed by an obligation to conform to the standards set for conventional higher education courses, but are tailored specially to meet the needs of those who pay for them.

The concept of local organization may vary from one country to another, and there may be considerable differences between individual communities, and between rural and urban ones. It is, therefore, essential to discover what forms of organization already exist and to consider the extent to which they can be effectively harnessed for the establishment of much-needed social services, such as education and health. Only in this way can a passive dependence on outside assistance be reduced, and a confident self-reliance be encouraged. Only by this means, too, can more relevant services be provided, which meet real needs, and which ensure greater economic and social development.

It may be argued that impoverished and illiterate communities have neither the capacity nor the competence to take charge of their own social services. Experience has shown that even in the most unfavourable circumstances this is not the case. In Ethiopia, for example, at a time when there was a major drought, thousands of people were given temporary shelter in camps set up by relief agencies, where they were provided with water, food and shelter. It would be difficult to find more deprived people than drought

victims, and yet, after only a short space of time, when they had begun to recover their health, schools had been set up in each camp established for drought victims, in order to provide learning opportunities for young children. This was done by the people themselves, and with no assistance and no prompting from the agencies which were helping them in their rehabilitation efforts, or from the country's educational services. The schools were completely self-reliant, and the teachers were unpaid volunteers from among the drought victims. Simple awnings were erected in the open air as learning areas, and for protection from the sun, and the children made their own ink from wood ash, and wrote with twigs taken from bushes, or with their fingers in the desert sand. This was because the communities from which the drought victims came, already had their own forms of local organization, albeit for social occasions rather than for other purposes, and were able to adapt them quickly to the circumstances in which they found themselves. They had what was essential - human resources and organizational experience - and they used them.

It is often assumed by civil servants and administrators in developing countries that they know best what kind of education should be provided for the people they are employed to serve. Yet many of them may have little or no experience of the conditions in which deprived communities live. Some officials may have come originally from rural backgrounds, but were separated from them by their education and work experience, and may have subsequently been conditioned to find solutions to problems through traditional bureaucratic approaches, which demand government intervention and direction. Others may have come from the more privileged sectors of society, and may lack an understanding of the communities which they are expected to serve. In the mid-1970s the government of the day in Ethiopia decided to close all universities, high schools and institutions of higher education, for a period of more than a year, and sent all staff and students out to rural areas in a national campaign to promote rural development. It was not a success, since those recruited, and who were exclusively from educational institutions, generally found themselves in a harsh and alien environment, with which they were unfamiliar and were unwilling to confront, and were often sent to live among people whose language they did not speak, and with whom they had little in common and found it difficult to work. The benefits of the exercise were to be found not so much in rural development as in the furnishing of a greater insight among the educated of the problems of rural communities.

An illustration of how local knowledge should not be ignored was the occasion in a new African settlement, when the villagers found they had no supply of water. A qualified expatriate engineer was sent to help them to find water, and he instructed them to dig a well in a certain spot. The villagers were reluctant to do this, but under pressure finally agreed to do so. Their efforts were in vain and no water was found. The villagers then admitted that they knew there was no water there, and when pressed revealed that attempts had already been made to find water, which had proved fruitless. When asked why they had not explained this earlier, they replied that since the engineer was highly educated and they were ignorant peasants, they did not presume to question his judgment and competence.

Acknowledgment must be made of the fact that deprived people have considerable experience in the art of survival, and that they thoroughly understand the problems with which they are faced.

It should be recognized that there is often a potential for local organization which exists, and which is not always exploited. It is a major task to consider how this can best be done.

The Government and Local and Community Organization

Government Promotion of Local and Community Organization

In remote and inaccessible areas, where government authority is enforced only with difficulty, then a form of local administration is the only possible option. Yet government approval and encouragement are desirable if social and economic progress is to be made.

The lack of financial and material resources may make it impossible for the necessary assistance to be furnished by the central administration, and the only solution for communities is to do what they can for themselves. Official recognition of the need for local initiative, enterprise and decision-making can, therefore, do much to promote self-reliant communities. Lip service to the principle of local community organization will not, however, be enough. Even where there is a declared official policy in favour of decentralization and local responsibility, government officials may do little to promote the approach, and may even obstruct it. Promises to allocate land and to make tax concessions may not, in practice, be honoured. There are many ways in which governments can actively promote and assist local organizations, without detracting in any way from the right of communities to decide for themselves what their educational priorities are. The passing of laws and decrees in favour of local organization, and the provision of training for community-based animateurs or facilitators, can all help to promote a more decentralized approach to development. Official recognition by national authorities of those elected by communities to act on their behalf is also essential. Information can be provided on how best to establish local organizations by means of published materials and radio and, possibly, television programmes. Successful efforts made by communities to provide education services can be publicized, and non-governmental organizations, businesses and private enterprises can be encouraged to participate actively in the development of such facilities. Governments can also encourage local organizations to seek credit from banks and obtain assistance from non-governmental agencies which are willing to work with them. The use of local languages for learning purposes can be urged and help given in the provision and distribution of essential materials and equipment. The teaching of literacy and numeracy can also be promoted in workplaces, private enterprises, health centres and businesses, and be integrated into the working day. The contribution made by religious groups and voluntary and non-governmental agencies, which provide learning opportunities for communities should be recognized, when their efforts do not conflict with those of government policy. However, constant supervision and monitoring are essential to ensure that obstacles are not placed in the way of the successful implementation of policies.

In many African countries government authorities give priority in their programmes of assistance for education to those communities which show a readiness to make a contribution through voluntary labour, the supply of locally available materials, the raising of funds, payments for services, etc. Aid for the building of some primary schools in Ethiopia, for example, was given to communities which met half the cost of construction. Preference in supplying books, materials, radios, etc., is sometimes given by national authorities to communities which have proved themselves competent at administering their own affairs. This is a fairer way of providing assistance to communities than on the basis of their political, ethnic and religious affiliations.

It is important that there should be no ambiguity in the strategy adopted. If the government regards a local organization merely as an instrument for carrying out decisions made at the centre, and exercises the right to overrule any decisions made locally, then it is unlikely that a satisfactory partnership will develop between the government and the communities. An example of this was the occasion when a newly settled community in an African country set up an efficient local organization, with the aid of an outside agency, and made considerable progress in the development of its social and economic programmes. It used a recommended and proved system of accounting, which was not only efficient, but was also easy for them to use and understand. When a government official visited the community, and learnt of the procedures that were being followed, he ordered them to be discontinued at once, since they did not comply with official government rules and regulations. When these were explained to the community cashiers they found them complicated and bureaucratic, and refused to use them. The government official had not taken into consideration the level of education of the local officers concerned, or of the need to use procedures which were within their competence. Worse still he had failed to give adequate recognition to the contribution made by the local organization in using its initiative to improve the lives of its people.

There is still, regrettably, considerable intellectual arrogance and condescension on the part of some government officials towards the more deprived members of society. They ignore the fact that for centuries people in deprived societies have mastered the art of survival, and have shown great resilience and resourcefulness in doing so. The feeling that illiterate communities are not to be trusted, and that they are incapable of making wise decisions, is widespread and is not easily removed. Fears may be expressed that funds given to local communities may be misappropriated, though there is no greater risk of this being the case at the local level than there is at the central one. There is little justification for believing that local communities cannot be trusted to handle their own affairs. It is, in fact, significant that many aid agencies increasingly favour projects which give help directly to local communities, rather than channel it through a government administration, where bureaucratic procedures and even corruption may hinder, rather than promote, social and economic progress. An organization such as The Grameen Bank in Bangladesh, has given priority to providing credit directly to the poorest and most deprived members of society, and in particular to women, and it has shown conclusively that the poor are often more credit-worthy than the more prosperous members of society. Moreover the Bank staff do not demand that people should go to the Bank, but instead go out themselves to reach the people. Pre-conceived notions about what will, and will not work, in the developing world must be questioned by governments, if real progress is to be made in involving all members of society in development activities.

It is also unfortunate that on occasions when local organizations prove competent in establishing their own social services, a government may then be tempted to intervene more directly in their activities, and may even attempt to exercise greater control over them, by such measures as insisting on political appointments being made to certain managerial positions. Such tactics can only impair, rather than promote, a good relationship between a community and a central authority.

Decentralization

Decentralization is a word that is much in vogue, though the extent to which this means the devolution of administrative powers from the centre to other organizations, is not always clear. If these subsidiary bodies are seen merely to be instruments for the implementation of orders given from above, then real decentralization will not take place. It is questionable whether decentralization describes what really happens when local communities are urged by central authorities to pay for and build their own schools, but are obliged to construct them according to plans made for them by architects working outside the community, are expected to follow curricula and use textbooks which are prescribed for them, whether they meet their language and learning needs or not, and are told what salary scales they must pay their teachers, whether they can afford them or not. Far greater consideration should be given to the extent to which there is real decentralization.

A local organization which is seen as a tool of a higher authority will not have the confidence of the people it claims to represent. Much greater reliance will be placed on local organizations when they are seen as the foundations on which a national structure is built, rather than as pawns to be used to gratify the interests of the people at the centre.

An example of how official support for local organization can contribute to educational development was provided in Scotland as long ago as 1696. At that time an Act for the Settling of Schools was passed, which decreed that every parish - a district with its own church or clergyman - should have its own school. This was long before there were ministries of education, and the approval of the Act was a means of giving official support to the development of educational facilities under the administration of local authorities. The provision of suitable accommodation, the amount of payment of remuneration to teachers, and the supply of reading materials, were all decided by individual parish councils according to the means available and not by an outside authority. T.B.Macaulay in his 'History of England', first printed in 1855 (see p.596 in Vol 4 of The Folio Press edition of 1986), describes the results of the Act as follows:

"But by far the most important event of this short session was the passing of the Act for the Settling of Schools. By this memorable law it was, in the Scotch phrase, statuted and ordained that every parish in the realm should provide a commodious schoolhouse and should pay a moderate stipend to a schoolmaster. The effect could not immediately be felt. But before one generation had passed away, it began to be evident that the common people of Scotland were superior in intelligence to the common people of any other country in Europe. To whatever land the Scotchman might wander, to whatever calling he might betake himself, in America or India, in trade or in war, the advantage which he derived from his early training raised him above his competitors. If he was taken into a warehouse as a porter, he soon became foreman. If he enlisted in the army, he soon became a serjeant. Scotland, meanwhile, in spite of the barrenness of her soil and the severity of her climate, made such progress in agriculture, in manufactures, in commerce, in letters, in science, in all that constitutes civilisation, as the Old World has never seen equalled, and as even the new World has scarcely surpassed".

Even taking into account a certain amount of bias and exaggeration on the part of the famous historian, it is noteworthy that it was not until almost 200 years later that compulsory education was made law in England, and universal primary education became a reality there.

Problems of Local and Community Organization

Local organizations may be created along ethnic, religious, linguistic and political lines, and may exclude certain members of society from their deliberations and activities. Such organizations are not always intended to be either truly democratic or to serve the interests of an entire community. There is no reason why such organizations should not exist, but they should not be considered to be representative of all sections of the community where they are to be found. This study is not concerned with such organizations, but only with those whose purpose it is to represent all members of society without exception or discrimination, and which are intended to promote social and economic progress.

It must be recognized, too, that community organization affords opportunities for manipulation and abuse, as well as for the promotion of community welfare. In male-dominated societies, for instance, women may be prevented from participating in activities, and half the population will then have no say whatsoever in any decisions that are made. Those who are illiterate, or with only limited education, may be inhibited from expressing their views in public, and their concerns may not then be reflected in any discussions which take place. The views of high-school students and teachers may also prevail over those of other members of the community, when learning needs and instructional priorities are discussed.

Community meetings also provide opportunities for demagogues and power seekers to exert pressure upon others, and the views of the more articulate members of society may be heard more frequently than those of the shy and retiring. The more prominent and prosperous members of society may dominate meetings to such an extent, that only their demands are met, and at the expense of those who are more deprived, and whose needs are greater. In short, because a local organization exists, there is no guarantee that it will always work in the best interests of the people it is supposed to represent. It is essential that safeguards be provided, and that measures be taken, to ensure that self-interest, ambition, and the pursuit of power, are not used to weaken the democratic process and to stand in the way of real development. It cannot be emphasized too strongly that the main purpose of local organization is to promote human development and social and economic progress. This can only be done by truly democratic means, and by the participation of all in the making of decisions.

Local and Community Meetings and Committees

Meetings and committees are the usual means by which local organizations conduct their affairs. Decisions to appoint special committees are usually made at public gatherings, to

which all members of the community are, or should be, invited. However it is not always the case that all are represented. Women may be excluded, along with illiterates and members of ethnic, religious and linguistic minorities. House and land-owners may be given the right to attend, but not others. Some may have the right to attend, but not to vote, when decisions are made. As has already been pointed out, the possibilities for manipulation and abuse are considerable. In short, the fact that a public meeting is held, is no guarantee that its procedures are democratic or fair. Yet injustice can be redressed as fairly by a local authority as by a central one. In this regard any official instructions drawn up for the establishment of local organizations should include rules on the right to membership, and should make it clear that no-one should be excluded on discriminatory grounds.

Another problem that may be met in holding local meetings, is that while permission may be given for them to take place, there may be an insistence that any officials appointed be nominated from outside the community. This occurred in Afghanistan, where strict control was exercised in certain areas over the activities of local communities, and all office-holders were brought in from outside the community, and were not in any way associated with the people they were supposed to represent.

Similarly the right of all to speak should be respected, and care should be taken to ensure that individuals do not monopolize proceedings and discussions. The interests of special interest groups and lobbies should not be given priority over those of other members of society. The chairperson needs to be someone of considerable skill, if the views of all are to be heard, and if fairness is to be shown.

It is also often the case that the participants at community meetings sometimes defeat their purpose, which is to find self-reliant solutions to common problems in association with others, by using them instead as opportunities for making demands for assistance from a central national authority. So, for instance, at a community meeting held in a village in Ethiopia, where the purpose was to agree upon common courses of action, one person after another reiterated the same demands for a school, a clinic, a road, a well, transportation, etc., though there was no possibility whatsoever of any of the requests being granted. Everyone present knew the real aim of the meeting, but no-one wanted the occasion to pass without making a claim for assistance from the central government. The result was that a considerable amount of time was wasted before the meeting proceeded with its real business. Similarly some of those appointed to office in local organizations do not see their role to be the promotion of self-reliant activities which contribute towards social and economic development, but regard themselves, instead, as intermediaries between the community and the national administration, and consider their main task to be the procurement of financial and material aid. While there is no reason why they should not co-operate closely with development agencies engaged in extension work, health, water resources, malaria control facilities, etc., and it is desirable that they should do so, it is unreasonable for them to expect that their efforts to obtain preferential treatment over other communities will bear fruit, when they know that national resources are scarce, and that there is little possibility of any of their requests being granted.

Appointments to Local and Community Organizations

One result of a lack of experience in the organization of social services, at the local level, is that those initially appointed to office are often unsuitable for the tasks entrusted to them. The more prominent and opinionated speakers at a meeting tend to be elected to office whatever their competence. Subsequently, when the duties of office become clearer, their enthusiasm may wane, and resignation may follow. It may then be argued that this is an indication of the inability of local organizations, in developing countries, to handle their own affairs. It is nothing of the kind. It is rather an essential part of the learning process, during which the people learn to make more careful judgments and appointments. It is frequently the case that real progress is only possible after second appointments to office have been made.

It may often be considered that illiterate members of the community should not be elected to office. In the case of cashiers responsible for keeping accounts, and secretaries responsible for keeping minutes and records, literacy and numeracy are obvious pre-requisites for appointment. Yet some of the more respected members of the community, whose authority is widely accepted, may be considered to be more suitable holders of office than others, despite their inability to read and write. They should not, therefore, automatically be excluded from selection. In Ethiopia, for example, illiterate heads of local organizations often proved more efficient at handling community affairs than those who had benefited from schooling, and although their reports to meetings were sometimes recited orally in verse, rather than read from a text, their impact was possibly greater on the listeners than a written account would have been.

Voting Procedures

Voting is a standard procedure in the democratic process for making choices and reaching decisions. Yet problems may be encountered in its use in local organizations in developing countries. When many of the members of the community are illiterate, for example, it may be impossible to hold a secret ballot, since many people do not know how to complete ballot papers. In national elections in a country such as India, symbols are used instead of words to indicate political parties in voting papers, to enable illiterates to make their choices.

When it proves difficult to hold a secret ballot, then a show of hands may be requested instead. This will be less satisfactory, since there may be an obligation on the part of some members to vote for an unsuitable candidate, as to do otherwise might have adverse personal consequences. The lack of secrecy may also give rise to the exertion of pressure on the part of less scrupulous candidates to ensure election. On occasions it may be left to the chairperson of the meeting to reach a supposedly consensus decision, which may in fact be nothing more than a personal assessment, and in no way a reflection of the general feeling of the meeting.

Offices

The number of office holders may vary from one community to the other, though the commonest ones are those of Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson, Treasurer/Cashier, Liaison Officer and Secretary. There is often little to be gained from having a large number of members of a committee, providing that it is clearly understood that each one has duties to perform, and is expected to carry them out. Honorary appointments, with little responsibility attached to them, have little purpose in most deprived communities.

Sub-Committees

The establishment of sub-committees to deal with specific areas of concern, such as education and health, may be more effective than attempting to deal with them at general meetings. An education committee, for example, can assist in the determination of learning priorities. Such a committee can include teachers and literate members of the community, but should not exclude the illiterate and those who have not benefited from learning opportunities. Since the goal should be education for all, and not only for school-aged children, a variety of approaches to the provision of access to learning should be considered.

Possible Learning Opportunities

There are many types of learning opportunities that can be established and administered by local organizations, and they are not restricted to primary school instruction. A day-care centre run by community volunteers, which releases children and adults from child-minding tasks, so that they have access to gainful employment and educational opportunities, may bring more rapid social and economic benefits to the community than the opening of a primary school. If membership of education committees is restricted to the educated alone, then there is a risk that non-formal learning opportunities will not

receive the attention they deserve. In one African community, for example, nearly all the villagers were stricken with malaria, and it was essential to reduce its incidence before economic progress could be made. It was known that there was a hut, where all the necessary preventive medicine was stored, but none of it had been used because no instructions had been given regarding the dosages required, and the people were unable to read those given on the packets. In another village there was a plague of rats, which nothing had been done to control. It was only after a campaign to remove them had been successfully conducted, and grain stores had been made safe from their depredations, that other learning possibilities were considered. The learning priorities in these villages differed greatly from those of the teachers who worked there, and who were more pre-occupied with their own remuneration and further education opportunities than with the concerns of the villagers.

In Afghanistan returned refugees were provided with training in carpet and silk weaving, and in the making of vegetable rather than chemical dyes, in order to provide them with essential wage-earning skills. In addition health education and literacy and numeracy instruction were an obligatory part of the training provided. There were immediate social and economic benefits, and every trainee rapidly became literate and numerate, and there were immediate improvements in health and living standards. One trainee who participated in a course, later went on to establish four carpet workshops in a neighbouring country, where he now employs 340 workers in no less than four workshops. Other trainees used part of their earnings to pay for further education classes in the evenings. When a suggestion was made that the trainees might prefer to be trained at home rather than in a common workshop, they rejected it on the grounds that they would then be denied instruction in health and literacy, which they had found so beneficial. The importance of basic literacy and numeracy became apparent once the trainees found that they helped them to exploit their wage-earning skills more effectively.

A major responsibility of an education committee, therefore, is to present to the community, as a whole, the various options open to them when deciding their learning priorities. Community decisions should not be pre-empted by presuming that formal primary school teaching should take precedence over all other forms of education. In emergency and disaster situations, for example, it may well be that training programmes which teach wage-earning and survival skills, related to the provision of water, food and shelter, and which have more immediate impact, are of greater importance than those which bring benefits only in the long term, such as those provided through formal schooling. Requests for assistance are often made on behalf of refugee communities for the setting up of schools for the disabled, though it is known that these are costly to run, and that it is preferable to integrate the handicapped as far as possible into normal life, rather than isolate them from other members of society in special institutions. In many education programmes conducted by relief and NGO agencies, the major emphasis is on the establishment of primary schools, though the drop-out rates are often as high as 50 per cent after one year of schooling, and few evaluations are ever made of their real worth in terms of social and economic progress.

An education committee can also be responsible for liaison, not only with education offices in the area, but also with enterprises, businesses, factories and workshops, health centres, community radio services and schools, which may be ready to co-operate in the development of community-based programmes.

It is not to be expected that a local organization set up by a deprived community would assume responsibility for secondary or higher education, which is properly the concern of a central authority. The costs of such education are much higher, and it is well-known that many developing countries allocate a disproportionate amount of their education budgets to higher education, at the expense of basic learning facilities.

Curricula for Local and Community Education Services

Requests are sometimes made for curricula to be drawn up for education services administered by local organizations. The assumption is made that the rules which govern

formal education programmes are relevant for all other types of education. A curriculum is a programme of studies provided in a school or university, and is usually prepared by a Department of Curriculum Development in a Ministry of Education, or by a university faculty. Curricula generally prescribe the books to be studied, and achievement is assessed by means of written examinations, which in many cases are based almost entirely upon a knowledge of the content of those books. Certification is, therefore, awarded entirely on an assessment of whether the books have been read and understood or not.

The success of learning opportunities for the deprived, however, must be measured by different criteria: such as whether there is improved health, an increase in earning power, cleaner water and improved housing, increased confidence and a readiness to co-operate with others in overcoming obstacles. The learning needs of the deprived are infinite and cannot always be foreseen. They are not restricted to what is taught in formal learning institutions. They differ greatly from one community to another. A community without water needs to know where to obtain it, farmers struggling against pests need to know how to control them. It is important to know where the relevant information and knowledge can be obtained, which enable the disadvantaged to overcome their ignorance, and which ensure their active participation in social and economic development.

The Role of the Animateur or Facilitator

The role of the animateur, or facilitator, should be to encourage and guide people in communities to work together in the interest of social and economic development, to assist them in becoming more self-reliant, and to create an awareness of the options open to them in the provision of relevant education programmes. They can play an important part in providing instruction in the democratic process, and in helping people to understand the procedures needed to implement programmes successfully. On no account should animateurs, or facilitators, attempt to impose their own ideas with regard to learning priorities, but should endeavour to assist people in deciding them for themselves. Their work should be of a temporary nature, and once local organizations have become competent to run their own affairs, their advice and guidance should no longer be necessary. Those selected for training should preferably come from the communities they are expected to help. They should also speak the language of the people, especially when this differs from that of the government administration. They should, if possible, be literate, so that they can read any materials that may be available on local organization. The practice of training animateurs or facilitators from outside the community is rarely successful. High school graduates are sometimes recruited to become extension workers in rural areas, and given salary incentives and uniforms to encourage them to take up this form of employment. But such appointments may have a negative impact, since the officers recruited may not speak the language of the community, they may not identify with the people they are supposed to serve, they may be unable to gain their confidence, and they may see their work as a mere stepping-stone to their own advancement in government service.

The selection of suitable animateurs and facilitators is essential for the success of community organization. They must be committed to a participatory approach, have an understanding of its purpose, be experienced in its practice and be willing to devote themselves to community development. They must also recognize that their services are necessarily of a temporary nature and understand that, once the community is capable of managing its own affairs, their services will no longer be required.

Training

There is little likelihood that the local organization of education services will be encouraged unless there is a programme of guidance and training. Individual initiatives are sometimes taken, but they will not always be enough, and may not always be relevant. Universities are often willing to engage in such programmes, but the participants in the courses they provide may be restricted to those who have already benefited from education, and who are more biased towards more formal types of education. The content

of the courses, too, may be academic and theoretical, and may fail to address the immediate learning needs of the deprived. Training is best provided in field conditions, and within a local community. A real understanding of rural conditions and problems is obtained in a village, and not in an academic institution.

The training of animateurs and facilitators should include:

Guidance on the ways in which local organizations are established
Means of involving all members of the community in local organizations
Ways of conducting meetings
Ways of making appointments to office
The compilation and use of questionnaires
The maintenance of written records, minutes, reports, etc.
The safe-keeping of cash
The maintenance of accounts
The assessment of local problems
The determination of learning priorities and the study of options available
The provision of health education
The provision of literacy and numeracy instruction
The provision of day-care facilities
The provision of primary schooling
The provision of learning opportunities for women
The provision of learning opportunities for special groups: e.g. widows, orphans, the disabled and handicapped
The involvement of women in economic activities
The appointment of women to office
The establishment of liaison between the community and development agencies
The establishment of distribution services
The establishment of liaison between workshops, businesses, health and veterinary services, extension programmes, schools and educational institutions, etc.
The provision of learning opportunities at places of work, and literacy instruction and health education in association with skills training programmes
The procurement of basic reading materials and supplies for programmes
The establishment of private enterprises for the production of locally relevant reading materials
The setting-up of a reading room
The provision of information on possible sources of aid for programmes
The organization of group listening facilities
Liaison with community radio services where they exist
Guidance on the provision of storage facilities and the maintenance of records such as inventories
Guidance on possible rewards and remuneration for services rendered
The provision of micro-credit services
The organization of co-operative enterprises

Since priority learning needs differ greatly from one community to another, it would be impossible to develop a single programme of training that would be applicable to all situations. Programmes will, therefore, have to be flexible, if they are to meet the needs of different societies. Once a community has successfully implemented its own programme, it can then serve as a model for further training exercises through the use of a snowball effect.

Support for Local and Community Organizations

Apart from the advice and guidance given by trained animateurs and facilitators, local organizations also need reading materials and supplies, if they are to be able to operate effectively. Guides and handbooks are needed on various aspects of local organization, as well as simple reading materials on a wide variety of topics related to health, literacy and numeracy, skills training, marketing, etc. In addition certain basic supplies are needed for classroom instruction, skills training, health education, and sports and leisure activities.

Distribution services and storage facilities are also essential, to ensure that reading materials and supplies are accessible to all.

Reading Materials

The provision of adequate amounts of reading materials in the form of books, reference works such as dictionaries and atlases, readers, magazines, journals, newspapers, pamphlets, posters, etc., is essential for the development of education for all, and for the establishment of a culture of reading. These materials must also be available in the languages used by the readers and, in the case of new literates, in words with which they are familiar, and which they readily understand. They must also be sufficiently attractive to encourage an interest in reading. Unfortunately in many countries the development of the book sector has been inadequate to meet learning needs. There may be little or no private publishing, and the government may do little more than print textbooks for use in schools. As a result books may be badly written, may contain misleading information, and are so poorly bound that they quickly fall to pieces. Some books may even be questionable in content; as was the case in Afghanistan, when arithmetic was taught by means of calculations related to amounts of weaponry, and war was glorified and peace discouraged. An academic qualification does not necessarily guarantee an ability to write a good textbook, since this requires a special skill. Successful authors of schoolbooks are not only teachers and university lecturers, but also include those with experience in publishing. Few government textbook programmes in developing countries are successful in meeting their targets of printing books in sufficient quantity to meet the needs of all the schools. The development of a private sector in publishing is essential if all reading needs are to be adequately met. (See: Pernille Askerud: A Guide to Sustainable Book Provision: From Plan to Print. UNESCO, 1997). With rapid changes in printing technology it is now possible for business enterprises to consider making a greater contribution to the supply of reading matter. Careful consideration needs to be given to the extent to which private enterprise can be encouraged and assisted to establish small businesses beyond the main urban centres, which meet the reading needs of local communities by printing not only books and readers (and where necessary in local languages), but also newspapers, news-sheets, magazines, pamphlets, posters, etc.

Learning cannot be confined to the strait-jacket of a few selected school books. Such books are intended to meet the needs of the young, but not those of older learners. Learning and information needs are infinite, and cannot be satisfied by restricting the freedom to publish. Education for all demands books for all. In rural communities people need to know how to earn a living, and may need written guidance on what to do. They may need to know how to make bricks from earth, dig wells, weave carpets, make natural dyes and soap, prevent common illnesses, acquire marketing skills, keep accounts and records, write letters and so on. The list is endless, and no single textbook programme is capable of meeting all reading needs. Moreover a short reader on a specific topic, with colourful illustrations, and which can be passed on from one reader to another, may do more to encourage the reading habit than a badly written, and poorly produced, school textbook.

Reading materials are not restricted to books. They include newspapers, pamphlets, posters, notices and instructions on medicine bottles, packets., etc. They can also supplement other learning programmes. In Afghanistan where, to all intents and purposes, there is neither a government nor a private capacity to publish reading materials, the BBC/UNESCO radio soap opera New Home, New Life, which combines education with entertainment, issues an accompanying monthly comic strip magazine, printed in colour, which recounts the episodes in the broadcasts, and contains letters from listeners, general information, and special pages devoted to literacy and health matters. The magazine has had such a success that it is now in great demand, both by adults and for use in primary schools, where few textbooks are available, and its imaginative approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy and health education, has had a major impact on both teachers and learners. NGOs and UN agencies have been so impressed by the magazine that they have paid for special issues of it to be published.

If local organizations are to develop relevant and self-reliant educational programmes, they should have ready access to printing facilities which meet their particular needs. They will require written guidance on how organizations can be established, how to run meetings, keep accounts and records and make reports. They will need readers on matters of particular interest to them. In Afghanistan training courses for carpet and silk weavers and makers of natural dyes included compulsory classes in literacy and numeracy and health education. These were extremely popular with the participants, and this was, in part, due to the fact that illustrated readers on weaving and dyeing were specially written for them in the two languages they used. One consequence was that every trainee became literate in a comparatively short period of time. The need for tolerance and understanding in a country torn apart by conflict, was also addressed by publishing a special reader on the subject of peace.

In countries where there is an acute shortage of reading materials, local organizations can be encouraged to set up reading rooms, where a variety of reading matter can be made available, quantities of books can be safely stored, and where publications such as newspapers and magazines can be put on sale. The accommodation provided can also be used, when necessary, for other activities such as literacy classes or group listening to educational broadcasts

It is evident that any government which wishes to extend education to all, and which encourages local communities to participate in the programme, should carefully review its book sector policy, consider the extent to which the private sector can be more closely involved, and printing facilities established, to meet the learning needs of the deprived.

Equipment and Supplies

Education programmes intended to reach all members of the community cannot be implemented effectively without certain basic supplies and equipment. Primary schools and adult literacy classes need pens, pencils, erasers, exercise books, chalk and blackboards. But these are not the only supplies needed for all the learning opportunities that might be offered by local organizations. Health education requires thermometers, scales, measuring rods and first-aid kits, if the approach to the topic is to be practical rather than theoretical. Sewing classes can only be conducted if cloth, wool, needles, thread and scissors are available. Practical instruction in growing food is best given when there are spades, hoes, seeds and wheelbarrows to use. Sports and leisure activities are possible only when balls, nets, ropes and games have been provided. Basic tools are needed for carpentry and joinery, and for skills training programmes, while more costly equipment may be required for such activities as carpet and silk weaving.

Some of these items may be made locally available by such means as setting up small businesses to make them, e.g. chalk, soap, agricultural implements, volley ball nets, measuring rods, etc. This will promote both education for all and economic development, by the creation of employment in the private sector. Countries ravaged by armed conflict, such as Afghanistan, have large quantities of scrap metal which can be collected and made into farming implements and tools by skilful metal workers. The materials for making earth bricks, chalk and soap are often easily accessible, and all that is required is practical and written guidance on how to make them.

Not all learning supplies, however, can be provided through local enterprise and initiative. Some can only be obtained by means of purchase in local markets or by procurement from abroad, while the making of such things as chalk may require both locally available materials and imported equipment. Knitting and sewing can be taught by hand, or by means of more sophisticated machines. Looms for carpet and silk-making in villages may be made by the weavers themselves from locally available materials, while those used in factories are brought in from elsewhere. While aid agencies and central governments may assist to some extent in the provision of more expensive items of equipment, their use may only be possible when local organizations have the resources to pay for their purchase.

When a local organization has responsibility for supplies and equipment, facilities will have to be provided for their safe-keeping and storage, and instruction will also be needed in the maintenance of inventories and records relating to their use. The strict administrative regulations which frequently govern the storage of equipment and supplies in many developing countries, will have to be relaxed or modified, if effective use is to be made of them.

Distance Learning

Distance learning is one of the most cost-effective ways of providing education for all and of reaching the most deprived members of the population, and governments have become increasingly aware of its potential for providing basic education services. There are still sceptics who claim that the approach is ineffective, since poor people do not have radios, batteries or electricity. Yet careful research has revealed that there is little substance for such a view. In a country such as Afghanistan, for example, studies showed that more than 90 per cent of the population listened to the radio, despite many statements made to the contrary. Listening habits in developing countries, where people often listen in large groups, frequently differ from those in developed countries. Today technological advances in the production of wind-up and solar operated radios have meant that there is no longer a dependence on batteries and electricity, to make listening possible in remote areas.

As interest in distance learning has grown, so has an awareness of the importance of using it to advantage. It has become clear that those engaged in the production of such programmes need to be well trained for the work they have to do. The language used must be non-academic, messages must be clearly conveyed and understood, the length of programmes must not exceed the attention span of the listeners, and constant evaluation is necessary to ensure that programmes meet real learning needs. Frequent discussions and exchanges of points of view with the listening audience are necessary to ensure that broadcasts are relevant. The recruitment of staff to work on the writing and production of distance learning programmes should not be restricted to university and academic personnel alone, since the work requires special skills and knowledge, which are not always to be found in staff working in institutions of higher education.

Nor should all broadcasts be purely educational in content. The importance of sending out educational messages by means of entertainment has long been recognized. In Afghanistan the soap opera, New Home, New Life, which is a family drama about refugees who return to their villages after residence elsewhere, has proved both popular and successful, and has had a nation-wide impact. It is estimated that between 85 and 90 per cent of the Afghan people listen to the programmes, which are sent out three times weekly in two languages. Mention has already been made of how the issue of a monthly comic-strip magazine, in support of the radio drama, influenced teaching in the formal school system. The interest created by this programme has spread far and wide. The neighbouring country of Tadjikistan has requested help in the creation of a similar programme. Conferences on distance learning in England and in Egypt, and another on Basic Education in Amman, in 1996, all featured the approach adopted to distance learning in Afghanistan. The potential for educational broadcasts is great, and the part it can play in the establishment of self-reliant local organizations should be given careful consideration.

Local organizations can play a key role in making better use of educational broadcasts and soap operas, by arranging for group listening to take place, at a community centre, with the assistance of a leader or animateur able to stimulate follow-up discussions on the content of the broadcasts. Such groups can also provide valuable feed-back to the producers of programmes, and provide information regarding their timing, relevance, language, etc. Group listening is also a means of ensuring that those without radios are able to benefit from the programmes provided.

Community Radio Services

Community radio services which cater to the specific needs of people living in a particular area, and which broadcast in local languages and involve people closely in the content and production of programmes, can do much to assist in the provision of education for all. While there may be an initial reluctance on the part of central authorities to encourage this form of decentralization of the mass media, there can be little doubt that it can make a major contribution to social and economic progress. El Salvador is one country which has developed the approach successfully.

Women and Local and Community Organizations

Women and girls generally make up half the population of a normal community, and a local organization which excludes them from its deliberations and decisions cannot be said to be truly representative or democratic. Every effort must, therefore, be made to ensure that women take part in meetings, and be considered for election to office. In Ethiopia, for example, when Peasants' Associations were established in rural areas in the mid-1970s, women were given the right to stand for appointments. In the early stages, however, they were generally passed over in favour of men. It was only after some time, when men had become less enthusiastic for holding office, that women began to be considered for election, and that they became more actively involved in community activities. In many instances they proved to be far more dynamic and resourceful than their male predecessors had been.

Efforts also have to be made to ensure that the role of women is not seen as restricted to domestic duties. The status of women in society will not improve until they are more directly involved in economic activities, and participate more actively in the making of community decisions which affect their lives. Yet women's organizations in developing countries often fail to appreciate the importance of this, and tend to sponsor projects which are confined to domestic obligations, and appear to endorse the view that women should be kept in the home. Proposals for assistance for Afghan women made by Afghan women's organizations, for example, are almost exclusively concerned with activities such as sewing and knitting, and jam and pickle making. Apart from the fact that many of the women may already possess these skills, and the economic benefits gained from them are minimal, there is little attempt on the part of the women themselves to become involved in the making of decisions, which affect their own welfare and that of their families.

Local organizations can support the advancement of women by allowing them to attend community meetings, to stand for office, and to appoint a woman to be in charge of affairs affecting women.

The importance of involving women in community organization was well illustrated some years ago in the border area between Somalia and Ethiopia. Girls' schools were built at considerable expense by the national authorities, but few girls attended them for cultural and social reasons. When, however, local organizations assumed responsibility for education, the demand for schooling for girls was so great that the people themselves put up extra sheds and huts to ensure that they had access to instruction.

Co-operatives

It is often difficult, if not impossible, for the impoverished to overcome deprivation singly, and to progress socially and economically, without help. Such help is often best obtained by working in close association with others, who are similarly disadvantaged, and who appreciate the difficulties that have to be overcome. For this reason co-operatives have been seen as an appropriate way of escaping from poverty. The raising of chickens and farm animals, the setting up of small businesses, such as textile and carpet-making, the digging of wells and the construction of schools, etc., have all been accomplished by co-operative approaches. Rural communities often have experience in working together for social purposes and this, with guidance and instruction, can be harnessed more effectively

to ensure that economic benefits ensue. Reading materials on the organization and management of co-operatives should, therefore, be made more widely available. Information on credit schemes is also essential if financial resources are to become more accessible to the impoverished and the deprived.

It also has to be admitted that co-operatives are not always successful, and this is possibly due to the fact that certain learning needs are not met. It has, for example, been found desirable in many instances, to make the provision of assistance and credit dependent upon the provision of obligatory health education and literacy and numeracy instruction. Co-operatives whose members are healthy, able to read and write, to keep accounts and records, and to report on their activities, are more efficient than those without such skills. The project in Afghanistan for the weaving of carpets and the making of natural dyes, produced immediate social benefits in terms of improved health, and increased earning power, in a comparatively short space of time, no doubt because all trainees benefited from daily health education, and literacy and numeracy instruction, as well as skills training. All carpets were sold even before weaving started. Similarly instruction in marketing, shipping and storage was also necessary, to enable them to know how to manage their businesses more efficiently.

Remuneration

The question of remuneration for services rendered in local organizations is often the sunken rock on which many programmes founder. The reason for this is that rewards are often reviewed in terms of salaries, and salary scale standards are often set by outsiders who are familiar with those of the national civil service, and are automatically assumed to be appropriate for adoption. It is well known that school teachers' salaries are the main charge on government education budgets, and that much less is available for spending on buildings, reading materials and supplies. Despite this there are frequent demands from teachers in developing countries for their salaries to be increased and, whenever these are granted, then the amount of the budget available for the expansion of educational services to deprived areas is correspondingly reduced. A vicious circle is then created from which it is difficult to escape. The problem of payment and rewards must be addressed if the problem of financial constraint is to be overcome.

Although the greater part of education budgets is allocated to the payment of teachers, there is no guarantee that the quality of education will correspond to the amounts spent. In fact, in many developing countries teachers' salaries are considered to be inadequate, and moonlighting is common. This is the practice of taking on another job during working hours, such as the cultivation of land, which results in a high degree of absenteeism among the teaching staff. Classes are then left unattended, or put in the charge of an older pupil, or schools are closed completely. When, for example, a UNESCO consultant visited four rural schools in the space of one morning in a south Asian country, he found only one was fully operational. Two were closed completely, one lacked a full complement of staff and only the fourth was functioning satisfactorily. In Pakistan government salaries were paid to large numbers of so-called teachers who, in fact, never did any work in the schools at all. The difficulty of supervising schools in rural areas, a reliance on reports submitted only by school principals and teaching staff, and the failure to involve parents more actively in the running of schools, allow the continuation of malpractices, and result in a lowering of educational standards, and an increase in drop-outs from schooling.

The involvement of local organizations in the running of schools, and in their supervision, can do much to remedy these weaknesses, and to ensure that they are not deprived of a social service which is rightly theirs.

In programmes established for Afghan refugees in Pakistan by international agencies and NGO organizations, funds were provided for the setting up of primary schools. Teachers were recruited to work in them, who then exerted pressure to ensure that they were paid higher salaries than those normally paid by the Afghan government of the day to primary school teachers. Some of the funding agencies agreed to their demands for increased payments, and in so doing created problems for themselves. The refugees remained in

camps for year after year, and the schools became permanent rather than temporary fixtures. As time went on the resources of the donor agencies came under strain, and their budgets had to be reduced, and it was no longer possible to meet the cost of paying teachers' salaries. This resulted in violent physical attacks on the aid agencies concerned. This highlighted the need to assess priorities for the receipt of aid more carefully, and to abstain from involvement in responsibilities which are more properly those of governments and local authorities, rather than expatriate agencies. The need to consider alternative approaches to remuneration and reward cannot be too strongly emphasized.

The assumption that financial rewards provided for civil servants are appropriate for services rendered in deprived areas is open to question. There is often a tradition of voluntary service in rural areas, and rewards may not be monetary but given in the form of supplies of food or grain, the allocation of land for cultivation, or the provision of housing. In short the rewards given should be within the means of the community to provide them. Nor should it be forgotten, that when economic development takes place, there are occasions when a community may decide to pay even higher salaries to teachers than those on the government scale. Long-term sustainability is essential before any assistance programme can be regarded as a success.

Strategies for Local and Community Organization

It is unfortunate that many projects, which are intended to promote local and community organization, are formulated in such a way that, in fact, they defeat their purpose. Some reference has already been made to the reasons for this, but a summary of the main ones is needed for consideration by those engaged in such exercises.

Despite the fact that projects are ostensibly designed to encourage decentralization and community responsibility, administrative control and decision-making firmly remain the responsibility of government ministries, such as those of Education and Community Development. This often results in the development of a remittance mentality in communities, rather than a willingness to become self-reliant, and creates the belief that the authorities can always be called upon to meet all development needs. While government approval may be necessary for the implementation of certain programmes, far more real power needs to be transferred to the communities themselves.

Steering and managerial committees are often composed principally of government and non-governmental officials, expatriate personnel and others, but with few or no community representatives. Meetings may also take place at central and regional venues, rather than at community locations, and may thus deny committee members a first-hand knowledge of local conditions. This practice tends to impose learning priorities upon, rather than elicit them from, the intended beneficiaries.

Training programmes, workshops and seminars are frequently held at central or regional locations, far from the sites where projects are implemented, which may inhibit a real understanding of local needs. Staff recruited to conduct such courses may be university lecturers, government officials and teachers, whose approach is theoretical and academic, but who lack actual field experience. Detailed job descriptions and qualification requirements should be drawn up for all those engaged in training and supervisory programmes.

The preference often accorded to the recruitment of educational personnel to work in such programmes, may result in priority being given to formal rather than non-formal education, and a failure to use the instructional services of health workers (including midwives), agricultural extension workers, water resource personnel, malaria prevention workers, co-operative officials, providers of credit facilities, skilled craftsmen and others, all of whom are well fitted to make an important contribution to learning and to social and economic progress. Close co-ordination among all the sectors responsible for the social services must be developed, and on an equitable basis.

The appointment of animateurs and facilitators from outside the community will frequently have a negative impact, and especially if they do not speak the language of the area, do not understand the local traditions and practices, are regarded as servants of the government, and do not encourage the participation of the community in the making of decisions and the determination of priorities.

Inappropriate evaluation and measurement techniques can also obstruct the effective development of local and community organizations. An exclusive dependence on academic assessment by means of literacy and numeracy tests, and examinations patterned on those given in schools, is not enough. Social and economic progress must also be measured by the provision of information on improved health, increased earning power, greater access to clean water, better housing, provision of relevant reading materials, the exercise of local initiative and enterprise, etc.

Project budgets often allocate disproportionate amounts to the payment of expatriate and national staff, who are not permanently resident in the communities they serve, and on their transportation needs and administrative support, as well as on training programmes conducted far away from the communities themselves. Ceilings for such expenditure should be determined, to ensure that the communities themselves are the major beneficiaries of any assistance provided. The right of communities to be involved in the disbursement of funds should also be recognized.

Capital expenditure on building construction should only be agreed after full consultation with the communities concerned, since they should determine priorities, and may prefer to put up any buildings needed themselves, and use project funds for other purposes.

Projects implemented in only a small number of selected communities, and without a built-in strategy for subsequent replication on a national scale, will serve little useful purpose. Unless projects are subsequently locally sustainable, and capable of serving as training bases for other communities, then they are unlikely to produce long-term benefits.

Conclusion

The most valuable of all resources is the human one and yet it is not always used to advantage. Poor people are often resourceful and dynamic, and possess considerable skills, which they are not always encouraged to exploit. Efforts to help them fail, because the intended beneficiaries are not consulted as to what should be done, and decisions are made on their behalf, by those who lack a knowledge of their problems and priorities. A closer dialogue must be maintained with the deprived, if injustice is to be avoided, and development achieved.

There must also be a greater willingness on the part of central authorities to delegate decision-making, and to try out new approaches. It is often easier to state that innovation will not work than to attempt it. Declarations to the effect that untried approaches will not work are usually expressions of personal opinion, rather than careful considerations of their true worth. Some officials may consider that innovation is a threat, since it may reduce employment opportunities, and take away some of their power. Yet social and economic progress benefits everyone, and not just the impoverished, and leads to more job opportunities and not fewer ones. More confidence should be shown in the innate ability of people to surmount difficulties, and to help one another. Local and community organization is one means of doing this, and should be more effectively used than has been the case until now.

QUESTIONNAIRE

In order to serve a community well, any local organization set up to work on its behalf must know as much about it as possible. If this is not the case, then it is possible that the interests of the privileged will be given preference over those of the deprived, and the demands of articulate pressure groups and lobbies will more readily be taken into account than those of the disadvantaged. A local organization should, therefore, ensure that human rights are respected, without discrimination or exception, and that policies and programmes are developed which will bring about social and economic progress.

Detailed and accurate information is essential in order to support requests for assistance - whether from local or central government or from outside donor agencies. It is necessary, also, as a means of confirming that priorities have been determined and respected, and that proposed programmes are relevant to real needs.

The compilation of a questionnaire is a time-consuming exercise, and it will not always be possible readily to obtain the information that is needed. In the long term, however, it is an important tool of learning for all those directly involved in community activities, and serves as a bench-mark for the measurement of subsequent success or failure. The list of questions given below is by no means definitive, and was drawn up after taking into special consideration the requirements of the education sector. It is, therefore, intended only as a guide. Some questions may not be relevant, others may require elaboration, and some important questions may have been omitted altogether. It is a matter for a local organization itself to make up the questionnaire, while at the same time ensuring that it truly reflects the community it represents.

It must be recognized that the procurement of full and accurate information relating to rural societies in developing countries is by no means easy. Rural people are generally conservative, and may be suspicious and resentful of what they consider to be attempts to pry into their affairs. They may refuse to give any information at all, or may tell the questioner what they think he or she wants to hear - whether it be true or not. In certain societies well-meaning aid programmes to promote literacy and numeracy, and to introduce health services, have met violent resistance in isolated rural communities. For this reason care should be taken in carrying out any investigations. In some close-knit groups, the presence of foreigners may be completely unacceptable, and even nationals from outside the community may not always be welcome. For this reason an animateur or facilitator, acceptable to the community, and in consultation with the local organization, has the best possibility of gaining permission to carry out research. In some countries it may be possible to use high-school students to assist in the implementation of investigative programmes, though this is not always the case. Some societies may have more respect and confidence in older members of the community, and may more readily provide them with information. Attitudes may differ widely, even within a district and a province, and it is essential to find out what they are before proceeding with any fact-finding exercise.

General

1. What is the name of the community? Where is it located?

2. What is the population of the community? What are the numbers of males and females?

3. What are the principal economic activities?

4. How many men are engaged in economic activities? How many women are engaged in economic activities?

5. What percentage of the population is engaged in activities related to the following: food-growing, building, carpentry, metal-work, leather-tanning, handicrafts, small businesses, teaching, nursing and midwifery, local administration, etc?

6. How many of the population are house and/or land-owners?

7. What are the main ethnic groups in the community? Give approximate percentages for each one and include all minorities.

8. How many religious groups are to be found in the community? Give approximate percentages for each one.

9. How many languages are spoken in the community? Give approximate percentages for each one.

10. How many widows are there in the community?

11. How many orphans are there in the community?

12. How many disabled are there in the community? Give the number of children, young people and adults who are disabled.

13. How many people do you consider to be more seriously deprived or disadvantaged than others?
Who are they?

14. What are the principal health problems and commonest illnesses?

15. What assistance, if any, has been provided to the community by:

The Government?
Voluntary organizations?
Non-governmental organizations?
Women's organizations?
Local benefactors?

16. How many of the population are literate? List the number of males and females. How many of the population are illiterate? List the number of males and females.

17. How many of the population have completed primary education?
How many of the population have completed secondary education?
How many of the population have received higher education?
How many of the population have benefited from non-formal learning opportunities, e.g. skills training.

18. What opportunities are provided for religious education?

19. What opportunities are provided for private tuition or education in the home?

20. What means, if any, have been adopted to involve members of the community more closely in the activities of educational institutions?

21. What means of public transport are available?

22. If the community is a rural one what are the distances to: a neighbouring village, to the nearest town, to the capital, to a means of transport?

23. What are the distances to the nearest well, clinic, dispensary, hospital, malaria control centre, day-care centre, primary school, secondary school, teachers' resource centre, teacher training college, technical training institute, university, library, market, shops, bank, government offices, community centre, place of assembly, centre of religious worship.

24. Which of the following services are available to the community?

Irrigation and water services
Medical services (midwives, nurses, doctors, clinic, dispensary, hospital)
Schools (give type)
Extension services
Veterinary services
Forestry services
Grain stores
Banking services
Library or Reading-room

25. How many of the population have radios?
How many of the population listen to radio programmes?

26. What educational broadcasting services are available and in which languages (soap operas included)?

27. Which of the following reading materials are available?

Newspapers
Magazines and journals
Books
Posters and notices
(List the languages in which they are available)

28. What facilities exist for obtaining credit: e.g. money-lenders, banks, etc?

29. What official or unofficial information or instruction has been given to the community regarding local organization through: ?

Laws or decrees
Written instructions
Government officials
Community members
Extension and community development workers
Newspaper and magazine articles
Radio programmes

30. What voluntary services have been, or are, provided by the community for the establishment of facilities and services?

31. What buildings have been constructed or made available by the local community?

Day-care Centre
School
Clinic
Assembly Hall
Reading Room
Place of Worship

32. What funds have been raised by the local community for social services?

Local and Community Organizations

33. What local or community organizations, if any, exist?

34. If such organizations exist, what is their purpose - social, economic, political, commercial, etc?

35. How are they established?

36. Do all ethnic, religious and linguistic groups in the community have the right to membership of the organization?

37. Are women allowed to be members of the organization?

38. Are there separate organizations for men and women?

39. Are illiterates allowed to be members of the organization?

40. How many members of the organization are?

Literate
Illiterate

41. Are some members of the organization more privileged than others?

42. How many of the members are?

Chiefs
Headmen
Landowners
Farmers
Skilled craftsmen
Technicians
Business men/women
Government officials
Religious leaders
Midwives/doctors
Teachers
Others

43. Does the committee give special consideration to the needs of the deprived and disadvantaged, such as the disabled, widows and orphans and members of minority groups? Are they represented in the organization?

44. Does the local organization have any voice in the running of the local school or schools, e.g. through Parent Teachers' Associations?

45. Does the local organization have access to records of unofficial closures of schools, teacher absenteeism, pupil drop-outs?

46. Does the local organization have the right to exercise control over moonlighting on the part of teachers?

47. Identify any members of the community who could act as animateurs or facilitators in the implementation of educational programmes.

Local and Community Committees

48. If there is a local or community committee responsible for the implementation of activities, how was it appointed?

Voting by secret ballot
Voting by a show of hands
Appointment by a local authority
Appointment by an outside authority

49. How many members of the committee are there?

50. How often does the committee meet?

51. What are their titles, e.g. Chairperson, President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Cashier, Secretary, etc?

52. Are there any sub-committees responsible for activities related to specific social services, e.g. health, education, landmine clearance, etc? How were their members appointed (see 48 above)?

53. How many members of the committees are?

Literate/illiterate
Male/female

54. What liaison, if any, is maintained between the committee and social services in the fields of health, agriculture, education, etc?

55. How are decisions made?

By the organization as a whole
By the committee
By the head of the committee
By secret ballot
By a show of hands

56. Are regular oral or written reports provided by the committee on activities carried out?

57. Are statements of account available relating to the disbursement of community funds?

58. Are statements of account distributed to members of the community for approval?

EQUIPMENT AND MATERIALS FOR LOCALLY ADMINISTERED EDUCATION SERVICES

Literacy and Numeracy Instruction

Pencils
Pens
Pencil sharpeners
Erasers
Rulers
Scissors
Exercise books
Chalk
Blackboard(s)

Health Education

Scales to measure weight
Tapes and rods to measure height, etc.
Thermometers
First-aid kits
Table for use for physical examinations
Soap

Sports and Leisure Activities

Footballs
Volley balls and nets
Frisbies
Kites
Marbles
Sand pits for long jumps
Measuring rods for high jumps
Chess and draughts sets
Dominoes
Jig-saw puzzles
Radio
Cassette player

Tools

Spades
Hoes
Hatchets/adzes
Saws
Hammers
Cleaning brushes
Buckets
Wheelbarrows
Seeds

ACCOMMODATION THAT COULD BE PROVIDED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Office(s)

Day-Care Centre

Rooms for Primary School Teaching/Literacy Instruction

Health Centre

Reading Room/Group Listening Room

Community Centre/Meeting Place

Workshops for Skills Training

Storage Room

Printing Shop

POSSIBLE EDUCATION SERVICES PROVIDED BY THE LOCAL COMMUNITY

Day-Care Centre

Literacy and Numeracy Classes

Skills Training/Basic Education Classes

Landmine Clearance Instruction

Health Education in Health Centres, Clinics, Hospitals, through Immunisation Campaigns etc.

Reading Room/Library

Correspondence Courses

Community Radio

Radio Listening Facilities

Publishing Facilities/Newspapers in Local Languages

Religious Instruction in Churches, Mosques, Temples, etc.

Instruction in the home, workshops, factories, businesses, etc.

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